

**To: Interested 10th District Citizens**  
**From: Rep. Frank R. Wolf**  
**Date: October 21, 2005**  
**Re: Immigration Reform**

Knowing of your interest in immigration issues, I want to update you on action taken this year in Congress and other efforts I am supporting to make our borders more secure. Like you, I am deeply concerned about illegal immigration. Congress must make it a priority to fix this growing problem.

As the grandson of immigrants, I fully recognize that immigrants are at the foundation of our diverse nation. Nevertheless, there is no denying we have lost control of our borders, particularly our southern border. During a trip to Central America earlier this year I was disturbed to hear that more than 500 El Salvadorians a week enter the United States illegally. This is only one country. It is frightening to think how many illegal aliens from other countries are slipping across our borders every day.

The ease with which illegal aliens cross our borders on a daily basis also is unfair to the thousands of immigrants who follow the law and legally enter the United States each year. I have heard from several legal aliens in recent months voicing their opposition to sweeping amnesty proposals, saying this only encourages more people to enter the country illegally. There is also concern among legal aliens that those entering illegally are less inclined to become "good" citizens.

### Gangs and Immigration

Clearly we need to regain control of our borders. Our national security demands it. There have been recent news reports suggesting a link between al Qaeda and violent street gangs such as Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), whose members regularly cross back and forth across our border. To date, the FBI has assured me that there is no known connection between MS-13 and al Qaeda; however, the ease with which these gang members can cross our borders gives me great pause for alarm.

Gangs prey largely upon immigrant communities. This is tragic. No one should live in fear. Everyone in America, whether they've been here one day or a 100 years, ought to be able to walk safely in the streets of their neighborhood. Unfortunately, many in the immigrant communities in northern Virginia cannot safely set foot outside of their homes because of the gangs which have organized here.

I cosponsored and voted for legislation passed in the House earlier this year to give law enforcement agencies an important additional tool to use as they seek to make our neighborhoods safer. Among its provisions, the bill authorizes federal funding for joint federal, state and local gang investigation and prosecution; creates a statute to prosecute

criminal gang enterprises similar to the existing statute used to prosecute federal racketeering; creates mandatory minimum sentences for gang crimes and violent crimes, and funds gang investigation technology, joint databases and law enforcement and prosecution training. The bill also allows for additional prison time for gang members who are illegal residents and commit violent or drug-trafficking crimes. The bill is now awaiting Senate action.

As chairman of the House appropriations subcommittee which oversees the Justice Department, I also have worked to help ensure that the resources and coordination are in place to help respond to these gangs. Last year's omnibus spending bill included \$25 million for grants to state and local law enforcement to assist them in addressing the gang problem, money to hire 25 additional U.S. attorneys to prosecute gang crimes, and 24 additional ATF agents to conduct gang investigations.

Locally, county and city law enforcement agencies have joined with state and federal officials – including the FBI, DEA, ATF and U.S. Marshals Service – to form the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force to tackle the problem of gang violence head on. A similar task force is operating in the northern Shenandoah Valley. Much of the funding for the task force has come via my position as chairman of the House appropriations panel that oversees the budget of the Justice Department. This regional approach, coupled with education and intervention, is making a difference.

### Identifying Illegals

In May, Congress cleared with my support and the president signed into law a major step to strengthen immigration policy and border security. Reforms in the REAL ID Act are aimed at preventing another 9/11-type attack by disrupting terrorist travel and putting in place commonsense driver's license and state identity card provisions to make it difficult for terrorist and criminal aliens to move freely throughout our society. Now more than ever, drivers' licenses are accepted as identification for federal purposes, such as boarding a commercial airplane, entering a federal building, or a nuclear power plant. Giving state drivers' licenses to anyone, regardless of whether they are here legally or illegally, is an open

invitation for terrorists and criminals to exploit. Under this new law, states will have to require proof of lawful presence in the U.S. before issuing drivers' licenses.

The new law also strengthens border security by shutting down the so-called "Smugglers Gulch," a canyon along the westernmost California-Mexico border frequently used for illegal entrance into the U.S., so law-abiding Americans are better protected from terrorists, drug smugglers, alien gangs and violent criminals seeking to operate here. It will provide for completion of a 14-mile border fence inland from the Pacific Ocean in San Diego.

The measure also will weed out fraudulent asylum applications to prevent the ability of potentially dangerous aliens to show up under false pretenses on our shores and be

granted safe haven, while simultaneously protecting and welcoming those who are legitimately fleeing persecution.

## Homeland Security

During consideration of this year's homeland security spending bill, I voted for an amendment that clarifies that local law enforcement personnel are fully authorized to apprehend, detain, or remove aliens in the United States (including the transportation of such aliens across state lines to detention centers) to assist in the enforcement of federal immigration laws when they are carrying out their routine duties.

The successful amendment also directed the Department of Homeland Security to provide a training manual for state and local agencies to train their officers, and a pocket guide to aid officers in their routine duties. By clarifying that state and local law enforcement officers have the authority to enforce immigration law, the 2,000 federal interior enforcement officers now working to track down the over 80,000 violent criminal aliens with final deportation orders will have additional help in protecting our communities. The homeland security spending bill was signed into law on October 18.

In a related matter, I was pleased with the Department of Homeland Security's announcement in July that it will require 10-finger scan for foreign visitors entering the U.S. The US-VISIT program will now require a one-time 10-finger scan upon enrollment, with continued use of two-print verification during later entries, to ensure the highest levels of accuracy in identifying people entering and exiting our country.

## Cosponsored Legislation

Most recently, I have cosponsored H.R. 98, which would require the Social Security Administration to issue Social Security cards that contain a photo of the cardholder on the card, as well as an encrypted electronic identification strip, unique to that individual. U.S. citizens and legal immigrants would be required to furnish the card only when seeking new employment in the United States. They would not in any way be required to carry the card at all times, as would be required by a national identification card. In fact, the legislation contains specific language stating that it is the policy of the U.S. that the Social Security card not be used as a national identification card.

The new technology would allow employers to access a new Employment Eligibility database created by the Department of Homeland Security for information relating to the applicant's true identity and legal status. The legislation includes a \$50,000 penalty for employers that knowingly hire illegal immigrants who do not pass the scrutiny of the Employment Eligibility database. It also makes the hiring of a known illegal worker a federal offense punishable by up to five years in prison per count and mandates integration of Border Patrol and Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint databases. This legislation is pending in several House committees.

I sent a letter to President Bush expressing my concerns about illegal immigration and urging him to work with Congress to find a solution. In that letter I included a transcript from the August 2 “NewsHour with Jim Lehrer” on PBS which investigated the issue of gang violence in America and its tie to illegal immigration. You can find both by [clicking here](#). Please note the underlined sections of that transcript.

I hope this information is helpful to you. Please be assured of my continuing efforts in Congress to make our country more safe by addressing the growing problem of illegal immigration.

Best wishes.